

## **Globalisation poses challenges for Singapore: Balakrishnan**

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SINGAPORE : As Singapore takes on the economic changes of globalisation, the phenomenon is also posing political challenges for Singapore.

Speaking at this year's **Singapore Perspectives** conference, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Vivian Balakrishnan said globalisation has intensified economic competition and social inequalities.

Globalisation has given governments all over the world a huge challenge, and in Singapore it is felt even more acutely.

Dr Balakrishnan said Singapore's approach has always been to face the situation squarely and do what is needed to assure survival and success - one of which was the need to restructure the economy to keep up.

Beyond economics, Dr Balakrishnan said the government's response has been to engage greater participation and discussion among Singaporeans.

The heated debate over the Integrated Resorts was a good example, and Dr Balakrishnan dismissed suggestions that the issue had been a foregone conclusion.

He said, "The reality is that as a government, we had not decided on this issue for a very long time; the views within the cabinet reflected the diversity of the general public...we broke tradition and floated the issue before we had decided.

"Perhaps because we broke tradition, people found it difficult to believe that the government hadn't made a decision yet. As politicians, as policy makers, it would be truly foolish not to hear and not address legitimate views genuinely and meaningfully especially when we consider radical changes."

Looking into the future Dr Balakrishnan said the policy decision making process will be a new milestone for Singapore, and political openness will be an evolutionary process.

But he said the direction is clear.

"We will become more free, we will become more open, but because of our society's unique composition, our small size and vulnerability, we will always be cautiously radical and rather than ideologically revolutionary," said Dr Balakrishnan.

And to start the engagement process, Dr Balakrishnan said one of the ways is to have young Singaporeans be active in society to build a sense of belonging and have them understand their stake in Singapore's future.